

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-15 IO-14 SSM-05 /099 W
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R 011713Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0868
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: XF, SY, EG
SUBJECT: TIMES INTERVIEW WITH SYRIAN MIN INFO ISKANDER

FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF ARTICLE IN DECEMBER 1 LONDON
TIMES BY ITS CORRESPONDENT EDWARD MORTIMER, DATELINED
DAMASCUS NOVEMBER 30, REPORTING AN INTERVIEW WITH
SYRIAN MINISTER OF INFORMATION ISKANDER IN WHICH
ISKANDER COMPARED SADAT TO PETAIN:
BEGIN TEXT PRESIDENT SADAT WAS TODAY COMPARED TO
MARSHAL PETAIN, HEAD OF THE VICHY REGIME IN NAZI
OCCUPIED FRANCE, BY MR. AHMED ISKANDER, THE SYRIAN
INFORMATION MINISTER. MR. ISKANDER, A CLOSE ASSOCIATE
OF PRESIDENT ASSAD OF SYRIA, CLAIMED IN AN INTERVIEW
WITH THE TIMES THAT PETAIN HAD USED THE SAME WORDS TO
JUSTIFY HIS MEETING HITLER ON OCCUPIED FRENCH SOIL AND
SIGNING A TREATY WITH HIM AS MR. SADAT HAS USED TO
JUSTIFY HIS VISIT TO ISRAEL. HE RECALLED THAT GENERAL
DE GAULLE HAD DENOUNCED PETAIN'S MEETING WITH HITLER AS
AN INSULT TO THE FRENCH NATION, "AND DE GAULLE HAS RE-
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MAINED THE NATION'S HERO UNTIL NOW, WHILE PETAIN IN THE
EYES OF ALL FRENCH PEOPLE IS A TRAITOR." IT MAY BE
ARGUED THAT MR. SADAT DID NOT ACCEPT ISRAELI OCCUPATION,
BUT WENT TO JERUSALEM TO SECURE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL. MR.
ISKANDER DID NOT AGREE. FIRST, HE SAID, MR. SADAT HAD
"ACCEPTED ENDING THE STATE OF WAR BEFORE WITHDRAWAL,"
AND SECONDLY HE HAD "ADMITTED THAT JERUSALEM IS THE

CAPITAL OF ISRAEL; HE WAS THE FIRST PRESIDENT IN THE WORLD WHO ADMITTED THAT." "NEGOTIATIONS," MR. ISKANDER EXPLAINED, "MUST BE HELD AMONG EQUAL PARTIES. THE VISIT OF PRESIDENT SADAT HAS CHANGED THE BALANCE OF POWER IN FAVOUR OF ISRAEL, AND THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT WILL NOW DEMAND FROM US THE SAME AS PRESIDENT SADAT ACCEPTED. IN OTHER WORDS, SADAT AND BEGIN WANT THE OTHER ARABS TO COME TO GENEVA TO ACCEPT WHAT PRESIDENT SADAT ACCEPTED BEFORE. "THIS MEANS THAT THE PRESSURE OF THE UNITED STATES, INSTEAD OF BEING EXERTED ON THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT TO WITHDRAW FROM THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, WILL BE EXERTED AGAINST THE OTHER ARABS TO COME ROUND TO THIS ISRAELI ATTITUDE." IT IS IN ORDER TO "CONFRONT THE DANGER" THAT PRESIDENT ASSAD WAS PLANNING TO GO TO TRIPOLI TOMORROW FOR THE SUMMIT CONFERENCE OF HARD-LINE ARAB POWERS CALLED BY COLONEL GADDAFI. BUT IT WAS CLEAR THAT HE DID NOT INTEND TO BE STAMPEDED INTO A "REJECTIONIST" LINE. IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE ON MONDAY HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE OBJECT OF THE TRIPOLI SUMMIT WAS "NOT TO ISOLATE ONE PERSON OR ONE REGIME"; THAT MR. SADAT WAS STILL IN HIS EYES "PRESIDENT OF THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT"; AND THAT IT WAS WRONG TO SPEAK OF A "DIVORCE" BETWEEN EGYPT AND SYRIA. THERE WERE "SIMPLY DIFFERENCES OF VIEWPOINT BETWEEN US ABOUT THE METHODS OF ACHIEVING PEACE," HE SAID.

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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
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Disposition Event:
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